/117 cont./

312 puna, which are covered with sparse herbage. In some places
246 lagoons are formed which are propitious for growing water plants,
231 which serve as food for the pigs, as black and hairy as boars. The
137 Čipaya assert that 12 kinds of plants grow in their soil, the names of which they obligingly enumerate in prayers to their divinities. As I am not a botanist /118/ I could not verify the accuracy of this assertion. It nonetheless reveals a certain care for precision among the Čipaya, which is perhaps superfluous when one considers the scantiness of this flora which a little wetness causes to grow in the
132 midst of sand. In January and February the territory of Chipaya
133 has the appearance of a vast swamp. This monotonous and desolate
346 land is suddenly transfigured as if animated by the magic of the refraction of a supernatural life: a few small religious buildings plastered with white earth are transformed into sparkling mosques, the "water houses" and the enlarged and multiplied pigsties give birth to strange cities which line the edges of immense lakes in which bizarrely cut mountains are reflected. In the sky the clouds draw into strange formations and assume a luster elsewhere unknown. It is also the period of great storms. There are days when half the horizon is illuminated by the sun while the other, in the night, is ravaged by the tempest and furrowed by lightning.

133 Without these periodic inundations the territory of Chipaya would be only a sandy plain identical with those denuded expanses which separate it from the Coipasa salt marshes. Thus the existence of the Čipaya depends on the flooding of the Lauca River, which, practically dry in winter, carries a considerable amount of water in the summer. Sometimes it happens that the characteristic winter dryness is prolonged into the summer months, threatening to destroy, along with the wretched grassy vegetation
132 of the "canton," the flocks which feed upon it. This is the most
221 crucial time of the year, the one in which the fortunes of the tribe
196 are at stake. Hence it is not astonishing that all the great festivals of the Čipaya take place at this time and that all have the